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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY,  
MAY 29, 2003

1. This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for May 29, 2003. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

2. **Turkiye:** During regular checks at the entrance of Ercis township of Van, the jandarma teams arrested Halise Batgi, a woman alleged to be a PKK member. Carrying a false ID, Batgi was planning to go to Ankara. It is claimed that she would attend the PKK's organizational activities and undertake terrorist attacks. Based on the information obtained from Batgi during her interrogation, another person, Sedat Senay, was also arrested. Batgi and Senay were taken to the State Security Court in Van after their interrogations were concluded.

3. **Cumhuriyet:** The Assyrian origin citizens, who migrated from Sarikoy village in Sirnak in the mid-1990s due to terrorist events, are afraid to return to their village because of the village guards. The citizens, with Bishop Samuel Aktas in Midyat of Mardin acting as the intermediary, asked the governor to expel the village guards from their houses. Assyrians have begun to return due to the June 12, 2001 circular by former Prime Minister Ecevit ordering the facilitation of the return of Assyrians. The Assyrians are uneasy about returning because of the obstacles created by the village guards. In their petitions to the governor, the villagers claimed the village guards had occupied their homes and had been cultivating their land and orchards, and their property rights were also violated.

4. **Cumhuriyet:** Sanliurfa, the "City of Prophets," is expecting to be included in UNESCO's decision determining the cities included in the World Cultural Heritage Program. UNESCO will evaluate sixteen cities in this category, including Sanliurfa and Mardin, in its convention between June 29-July 5. Sanliurfa and Mardin are considered as important places for religious tourism. Ismail Demir, Sanliurfa's Chamber of Commerce and Industry President, and Sabri Kurkcuglu, head of cultural and historical studies on Sanliurfa, called upon all organized institutions in town to be sensitive about the issue prior UNESCO's decision.

5. **Cumhuriyet:** Members of the "Bible Society" are delivering Kurdish copies of the Bible at a stand they opened in Diyarbakir because of the Cultural Festival in town. The Bible Society publicizes the Bible, the Old Testament, and the New Testament throughout the world. The representative of the Bible Society, Behnan Komutgan, said it was unfair to label them as missionaries because the Bible Society members are honorable Turkish citizens. Komutgan said the first four chapters of the Bible were translated into Kurdish under the name of "Mizgin" (Good News), and the translation into Kurdish of the 27 chapters of the entire Bible would be completed by the end of the year. Komutgan added that the Holy Books had been translated into 2,040 different languages and accents in the world.

6. **Hurriyet/Radikal:** Following the May 1 earthquake in Bingol, 713 of 1,770 teachers in Bingol province applied for a transfer to other regions. As the Provincial Education Directorate failed to persuade the teachers to stay in the

area for another year, the teachers' petitions for transfers will be submitted to the Ministry of National Education on May 30. It is reported that all of the teachers who have asked for a transfer are homeless.

17. Hurriyet/Bolge: Because of demand by women, the Adana City Council's Women Committee, the Women Consultation Center, and the Association to Establish Women Shelter Houses are working together to open a "Women's Shelter House" in Adana. The president of the association, Nurten Mersinli, said the Adana Municipality promised to support their efforts.

#### ECONOMIC AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

18. Bolge: Adana's Provincial Director of the Labor and Employment Department, Hasim Meydan, said 7,783 workers were laid off during the first four months of 2003. Meydan added his Department had paid a total amount of three million USD to eligible workers since the enforcement of the "Unemployment Insurance Law." Meydan gave the number of registered jobless persons as 18,568 compared to 16,770 last year. Meydan also mentioned that his Department had found jobs for 2,807 persons in private and public sectors during the same period.

HOLTZ